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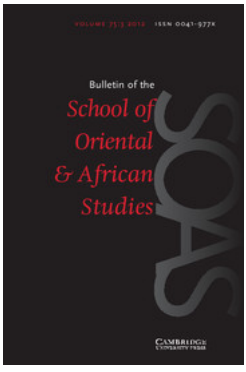

The Near and Middle East Margot Badran: *Feminists, Islam, and nation: gender and the making of modern Egypt*. xi, 352 pp. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. $35.

Nadje Sadig Al-Ali

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surrounding countryside. The British administration and the Zionists initiated a number of projects that attracted Arab workers, both skilled and unskilled, Haifa becoming a haven of employment for Palestinians and workers from neighbouring Arab regions.

In the final section of her book Seikaly describes the consequences of these two factors: firstly, fears engendered by massive Jewish immigration, and secondly, the concentration of very large numbers of Palestinians in the town, many of them from peasant backgrounds and economically depressed, both in producing the rebellion of 1936–39 and in giving it the specific character which it possessed in northern Palestine.

The approach adopted by Seikaly is to examine four main aspects of the transformation of the Arab community of Haifa. In part one she discusses the physical and demographic character of Haifa in 1918, including the community's composition, the town's size and the distribution of quarters. Part 2 analyses the demographic transformation of Haifa's population and the movement of the various sectors of the community from certain areas to others, demonstrating how Zionist control of areas encircling the town, especially the old traditional Arab quarters, was gradually established. Part 3 deals with economic change: industry, which became a Jewish monopoly, and commerce, where the Arabs gradually lost their supremacy, and the position of labour. Thus Seikaly sets the scene for part 4 of her book, which is an account of the political development of Haifa's Arab community, culminating in the radicalization which produced the armed rebellion of Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam in northern Palestine in 1934–35, which in turn ushered in the country-wide strike and revolt of 1936–39.

The inexorable change in the balance of power between Haifa's Arab and its Jewish communities and the means by which this was brought about are scrupulously delineated by Seikaly and the book is a model of meticulous historical research. Her work moreover contains much of contemporary political relevance. Her description of the appeal of the militant Islamism of Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam to Haifa's dispossessed has obvious contemporary parallels, both in Palestine and elsewhere. Furthermore, her description of the pattern evident in Haifa's experience, whereby the town was physically encircled, economically segmented and its Arab community diminished, politically suppressed and socially fragmented, was not only repeated in many Palestinian towns, but is, as Walid Khalidi remarks in his foreword, paradigmatic in throwing light on the plight of east Jerusalem today.

STEPHANIE CRONIN

MARGOT BADRAN: *Feminists, Islam, and nation: gender and the making of modern Egypt*. xi, 352 pp. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. $35.

This recent study dealing with the rise and evolution of the Egyptian feminist movement from the late nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century offers a detailed, in-depth account of both 'organized feminist activism' and 'everyday feminist consciousness'. Using a wide range of sources (oral histories, women's memoirs, correspondence, the publications and speeches of feminists, journalistic articles and essays, etc.) Badran sets out to describe how the movement saw itself, as well as to provide the background of broad economic, political and social developments against which Egyptian feminist activism emerged.

Badran's impressive and important contribution to contemporary scholarship and feminist politics is most successful in refuting the argument that feminism in Egypt was a Western derivative or an alien intrusion (p. 20). Her perceptive study points to the overlappings, contradictions and complexities of the discourses and activism labelled Islamic modernism, secular nationalism and international feminism that developed within the frame of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. Throughout the book, Badran provides ample evidence that early Muslim women activists did not see a contradiction between their feminist and religious identity (p. 11), that they were often more radically nationalist than Egyptian male politicians (p. 87), and that as Egyptian 'national feminists' they were in conflict with British and French 'imperial feminists' (p. 21).

The rise of feminist consciousness (part 1) is presented in the context of nineteenth-century transformations in Egypt such as 'urban harem culture', modernization, women's education, secularization and an emerging women's press. The struggle to claim a public arena, outside the confines of the home, in the realms of education, work and politics, as well as women's involvement in the struggle for independence against the British colonial occupation characterize the period of an emerging organized feminist movement (part 2). In the last part of the book, Badran describes the institutionalization of pan-Arab feminism, which developed as a reaction to disappointments and tensions in relation to Western-dominated international feminism and in solidarity with the Palestine cause.

Badran's fluid and broad analytical category of 'feminisms' (p. 19) enables the author to emphasize that diversification in ideology and political consciousness were already characteristic of the early movement, typically associated with Huda Sha'arawi and the Egyptian Feminist Union. The depiction of public articulations of feminist demands, e.g. women's access to the educational system and the work-force, the right to vote, reforms of the personal status code, parallel with feminists' participation in campaigns and demonstrations during the nationalist independence struggle, supports Badran's contention that the movement was not mainly philanthropic in character as it has often been claimed.

By giving Nabawiyah Musa, the first woman to obtain a secondary school certificate, and of modest middle-class origin, equal weight in shaping the feminist movement as Huda Sha'rawi, Badran also attempts to challenge the commonly held view (see Soha Abdel-Kader, *Egyptian women in a changing society 1899–1987*, Boulder, CO, 1987; Leila Ahmed,

Women and gender in Islam, New Haven, 1992; and the works of Cynthia Nelson) that in its beginnings the movement consisted of upper-class women alone. However, her claim that the movement had already transcended élitism, does not persuade. According to Badran herself, the 11 founding members of the EFU were mainly from wealthy landowning families, raised within harem culture (p. 96).

More importantly, one cannot help but notice that Badran's broad analytical category actually conceals two types of feminisms, which appear to be linked to class affiliations. Mainly upper-class women are mentioned with regard to the 'official' feminism of the organized movement (EFU), while 'everyday feminism', e.g. journalism, the promotion of women's education and work, etc. was predominantly carried out by middle-class women. Without wanting to diminish the significance of women's everyday struggle to widen their social roles—which is certainly no less 'feminist' than participation in political campaigns and international feminist conferences—I believe that Badran runs the risk of concealing class divisions and romanticizing the unifying capacity of gender.

Furthermore, given her set time frame, one wonders why Badran decided to neglect activists and organizations outside the Egyptian Feminist Union, such as Doriah Shafiq's Bint al-Nil or Zeinab Al-Ghazali's Muslim Women's Society, for example. Badran's work is strongest on the early history of the EFU, as the rather sketchy and superficial concluding chapters dealing with the turn towards pan-Arab feminism show.

Overall, Badran's work not only increases our knowledge of the emergence of 'feminisms' in Egypt and the underlying political and economic transformations but also provides the necessary historical background for an understanding of the contemporary debates and battles of Egyptian feminists who continue to fight on many fronts at the same time.

NADJE SADIG AL-ALI

KATHLEEN M. MOORE: *Al-mughtaribun: American law and the transformation of Muslim life in the United States.* xiv, 211 pp. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1995. $16.95.

Al-mughtaribun, the Arabic word for emigrants, is derived from the root *gharaba*, which carries connotations not only of being far from one's homeland but also of Arabs facing the challenge of adapting to the Western way of life. In this very informative and well-researched book, the author chronicles a variety of interactions between Muslims in America and the United States legal system. Kathleen Moore's principal aim is to depict the gradual transformation which has occurred over time in the perceptions, self-identification and reactions of American Muslims, now estimated at more than four million, as they have experienced a greater range of contacts with the civil law.

Muslims living in the West face a dilemma. Should they strive to maintain a separate Islamic community, isolated from mainstream society, with a view to upholding their religious traditions and values, on the grounds that Islam is a comprehensive and inherently superior mode of existence applicable to a worldwide community (*umma*)? Or should they engage with their surroundings, make some cultural adaptations to suit local conditions, claim the rights generally accorded in liberal democracies to religious minorities, and hope that this form of accommodation will enable them to retain a considerable measure of their Muslim identity? In the main, Muslim settlers in the US have followed the latter course of action, but the process is complex and one virtue of adopting a legal perspective in analysing the forms of engagement and interaction is that it tends to focus on key issues and potentially deep conflicts.

In very broad terms, Muslims (and members of other religious and ethnic minorities) have three choices in responding to the realities of living within a Western legal system, albeit that the choices are by no means mutually exclusive. The first is to accept the existing legal rules and comply with them. The second is to utilize the rules to achieve specifically Islamic purposes or objectives, i.e. manipulate the system to one's advantage. In many instances, Western law is liberal and flexible and exists to facilitate people's wishes and plans, especially through upholding religious freedom. Thirdly, attempts can be made to reform the existing rules, e.g. by bringing test cases to alter previous judicial rulings and interpretations or by putting pressure on the legislative body for new statutory provisions.

Aspects of each of these approaches are apparent from the areas which Moore addresses. Two early chapters focus on the application of immigration and citizenship laws at the turn of this century. By this period US laws had been heavily influenced by notions of a hierarchy of races and cultures and certain restrictions had been imposed to ensure that only people of good 'stock' were entitled to become citizens. Did this include Syrians, many of whom could have been Muslims? The governing 1790 Naturalization Act (as amended in 1870) required applicants to be 'white' or 'African'. The question of whether Syrians could be naturalized as 'whites' ultimately fell to be decided on the basis of whether they 'closely resembled their European neighbours'. An appellate judge eventually ruled that they could. However, despite energetic efforts, South Asians failed to pass this test, on the ground that, although they were Caucasians, they did not fall within the 'popular' meaning of 'white'. Their dark complexions rendered them unassimilable. In similar vein, the Immigration Act 1891 barred the entry of polygamists and in one case, a Muslim was refused admission on the ground that 'he was a representative of a religious group that practised polygamy'. He won his appeal, but was only allowed entry on the condition that he did not 'preach polygamy'. It is clear from these laws that many Muslims were not regarded at that time as acceptable members of American political society, but the cases show them striving hard to